

Joel Roberts Poinsett to Andrew Jackson, October 16, 1832, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOEL R. POINSETT TO JACKSON.

Charleston, October 16, 1832.

private and confidential

Dear Sir, You will have seen by the public papers, that the Union party throughout the state of So. Carolina have been beaten at the ballot box; and you must be prepared to hear very shortly of a State Convention and an act of Nullification. Our party met last night, the first time after our defeat, and past resolutions expressive of our firm determination to oppose nullification and to adhere to our allegiance to the United States. But allegiance implies protection and we rely upon the Government acting with vigor in our behalf. The impression on the minds of the Nullifiers undoubtedly is that no measures will be taken against them, and that they will be left to carry out their designs with impunity. If so we have nothing to do but witness the triumph of Mr. Calhoun. I have on every occasion told my fellow Citizens that the Executive of the United States would act decidedly and vigorously. What that action ought to be I have not the presumption to hint at; but it is right you should know, that it is believed the Nullifiers intend to proceed first by process of law agreeably to an act to be passed. They will proceed by replevin, and I suppose if the Collector refuses (as he surely will do, for he is a firm determined, man) they will either imprison him or break open the Custom Stores. If the government in addition to any other measures they may chuse to take, think proper to aid the Collector in resisting this illegal and unconstitutional act, Measures ought to be taken immediately. Col. Lindsay ought to be ordered to take up his residence in the Citadel. He is now on the Island.

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I do not know what number of men he has, but more could be sent, by sending full companies and withdrawing such as are deficient, so as not to excite distrust—two or three hundred muskets and a number of hand grenades ought to be in the Citadel with their corresponding ammunition. Indeed whether the Government is disposed to resist the replevin and protect its Stores or not, the precautions I propose ought to be taken.

We are not disposed to make any riotous or tumultuous resistance; but we are ready to support the laws if legally called upon so to do at the hazard of our lives. I am sure I speak the sentiments of the party when I say so. Judging from the late conduct of these men we may have to defend ourselves against lawless violence, and we ought not to be left entirely defenceless, I mean without arms and ammunition. I am exceedingly anxious on this subject. The party in the city look to me for precautionary measures and I would not have them disappointed. All the officers ought to be men on whom you can rely and in whom we can place our confidence. Major Belton has, I believe, been sent away very properly. Mathias pay master ought not to be suffered to remain here taking the part he does agt. the government. Lining, Surgeon, ought to be removed. The custom house where the battle will be fought is crowded with Nullifiers, ought they not to be removed? I shall send Mr. McLane a list of them. The post office is filled with the Enemies of the government. I am advised even not to put a letter in the Post office of Charleston directed to you! Ought such 33 things to be at such a crisis? If the executive should resolve to remove these officers I hope Col. Drayton or some leading Union men will be consulted as to their Successors.

On the issue of this contest between the federal government and a faction in this State depends the permanency of the Union and the future character of this nation. We feel therefore a deep interest in the measures which will be adopted by the Executive and an earnest desire to lend our aid to render them effectual.

I am, dear Sir, respectfully Yours